

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. An offset coupler device for use in connection with a trailer having a kingpin, the device comprising:

a first plate member having an opening there through for receiving a portion of the kingpin of the trailer;

a support member coupled with the first plate member;

a second plate member coupled with the support member, the second plate member having a kingpin extending downwardly from a lower surface thereof, wherein the kingpin of the second plate member is spaced apart from the opening in the first plate member, whereby a central longitudinal axis of the kingpin of the second plate member does not pass through the opening in the first plate member; and

a means for coupling the device to the trailer.

2. The device of claim 1, wherein the trailer includes a skid plate from which the kingpin of the trailer depends downwardly, wherein the first plate member has an upper surface for abutting the skid plate during use, and wherein the means for coupling the device to the trailer includes a clamp member.

3. The device of claim 2, wherein the clamp member has first and second portions, a means for drawing the first and second portions together around a portion of the kingpin to clamp the clamp member thereto, and adjustable means for urging the first plate member against the skid plate to resist movement there between during use.

4. The device of claim 3, wherein the means for drawing the first and second portions together includes a first bolt.

5. The device of claim 4, wherein the first and second portions of the clamp member are generally block shaped with a sidewall having a semi-cylindrical groove therein, wherein the semi-cylindrical grooves in the sidewalls of the first and second portions of the clamp member cooperate to provide a generally cylindrical passage through the clamp member, and wherein the generally cylindrical passage is sized to receive a reduced diameter portion of the kingpin of the trailer.

6. The device of claim 5, wherein the means for drawing the first and second portions together further includes two generally horizontal bores in the first and second portions of the clamp member and a second bolt, wherein the two generally horizontal bores in the first portion align with the two generally horizontal bores in the second portion to provide two sets of aligned bores when the reduced diameter portion of the kingpin of the trailer is received in the generally cylindrical passage, wherein the first and second bolts are received in the aligned bores, and wherein the first and second portions of the clamp member may be drawn together around the kingpin to clamp the clamp member thereon by tightening the first and second bolts.

7. The device of claim 3, wherein the adjustable means for urging the first plate member against the skid plate includes a bolt extending between the first plate member and the clamp member, whereby tightening the bolt moves the first plate member away from the clamp member.

8. The device of claim 7, wherein the adjustable means for urging the first plate member against the skid plate further includes a first generally vertical bore through the clamp member, and wherein the bolt is received in the first generally vertical bore.

9. The device of claim 8, wherein the adjustable means for urging the first plate member against the skid plate further includes a plurality of vertical bores through the clamp member and a plurality of bolts received in the plurality of vertical bores.

10. The device of claim 1, wherein the trailer includes a skid plate from which the kingpin of the trailer depends downwardly, wherein the first plate member has an upper surface for abutting the skid plate during use, and wherein the means for coupling the device to the trailer includes a plurality of vertical bores through the first plate member and a plurality of bolts there through for bolting the first plate member to the skid plate.

11. The device of claim 1, wherein the opening has a central axis and wherein the central longitudinal axis of the kingpin of the second plate member and the central axis of the opening are spaced apart from each other a distance of five to eighteen inches.

12. The device of claim 1, wherein the trailer includes a skid plate from which the kingpin of the trailer depends downwardly, wherein the first plate member has an upper surface for abutting the skid plate during use, and wherein the upper surface of the first plate member includes a recess therein adjacent the opening, whereby the recess provides for an improved coupling between the device and the trailer when a lower surface of the skid plate of the trailer is uneven or includes irregularities.

13. An offset coupler device for coupling a fifth wheel trailer having a kingpin extending downwardly from a kingpin plate to a tow vehicle having a fifth wheel hitch, the device comprising:

a first plate member having a generally horizontal portion with upper and lower surfaces  
and an opening there through for receiving a portion of the kingpin of the trailer;

first and second supports extending downwardly from the lower surface of the first plate member;

a second plate member coupled with the supports, the second plate member having a generally horizontal portion with a kingpin extending downwardly from a lower surface thereof, wherein the kingpin of the second plate member is spaced apart laterally from the opening in the first plate member, whereby a central longitudinal axis of the kingpin of the second plate member does not pass through the opening in the first plate member; and

a clamp member for coupling with the kingpin of the trailer when the kingpin of the trailer is received in the opening in the first plate member, the clamp member having first and second portions which cooperate to clamp the kingpin of the trailer there between and an adjustable means for urging the first plate member away from the clamp member, wherein at least a portion of the adjustable means for urging extends between the clamp member and the first plate member.

14. The device of claim 13, wherein the opening has a central axis and wherein the central longitudinal axis of the kingpin of the second plate member and the central axis of the opening are spaced apart from each other a distance of five to eighteen inches.

15. The device of claim 13, wherein the clamp member further includes at least one bolt in a generally horizontal orientation for drawing the first and second portions together around the kingpin of the trailer and wherein the adjustable means for urging includes at least one bolt passing through the clamp member in a generally vertical orientation and having a distal end which cooperates with the lower surface of the first plate member.

16. An offset coupler device for increasing the relative distance between a trailer and its tow vehicle during use, the trailer having a kingpin extending downwardly from a skid plate and the tow vehicle having a fifth wheel hitch, the device comprising:

a body portion having an upper surface with an opening therein for receiving the kingpin of the trailer and a lower surface having a kingpin extending downwardly therefrom, the kingpin of the coupler being spaced apart from the opening, whereby a central longitudinal axis of the kingpin of the coupler does not pass through a center point of the opening;

a clamp member for coupling with the kingpin of the trailer when the kingpin of the trailer is received in the opening in the body portion, the clamp member being in a spaced relationship from the body portion; and

an adjustable means for urging the upper surface of the body portion against the skid plate to resist movement there between during use, wherein at least a portion of the adjustable means for urging extends between the clamp member and the body portion.

17. The device of claim 16, wherein the body portion includes an upper plate member, a lower plate member and a support, wherein at least a portion of the support is intermediate the upper and lower plate members.

18. The device of claim 17, wherein the upper plate member has an upper surface for abutting the skid plate of the trailer during use, wherein the opening is in the upper plate member, wherein the lower plate member has a lower surface for abutting the fifth wheel hitch of the tow vehicle during use, and wherein the kingpin of the coupler depends downwardly from the lower surface of the lower plate member.

19. The device of claim 16, wherein the adjustable means for urging the upper surface of the body portion against the skid plate includes a bolt threadably received in a bore in the clamp member.

20. The device of claim 16, wherein the clamp member has first and second portions, and wherein the first and second portions cooperate to clamp the clamp member to the kingpin of the trailer.

21. The mechanism of claim 20, wherein the first and second portions of the clamp member are generally block shape members, each having an inner sidewall, wherein each of the inner sidewalls have a semi-cylindrical groove therein for receiving a reduced diameter portion of the kingpin of the trailer when the clamp member is received on the kingpin of the trailer and wherein each of the inner sidewalls face each other in use.

22. The mechanism of claim 21, wherein the clamp member further includes two generally horizontal bores therein and two bolts, wherein the two bolts of the clamp member are received in the bores in the clamp member to draw the first and second portions of the clamp member together around the kingpin of the trailer.

23. A method of increasing the relative distance between a tow vehicle having a fifth wheel hitch and a trailer having a kingpin during use, the method comprising:

providing an offset coupler device having a body portion including an upper surface with an opening therein and a lower surface having a kingpin extending downwardly there from, the kingpin of the offset coupler device being spaced apart laterally from the opening;

receiving the kingpin of the trailer in the opening of the offset coupler;

coupling the offset coupler with the trailer; and

receiving the kingpin of the offset coupler in the fifth wheel hitch of the tow vehicle.

24. The method of claim 23, wherein the offset coupler is coupled with the trailer via a clamp member.

25. The method of claim 24, wherein the clamp member has first and second portions, and wherein the first and second portions cooperate to clamp the kingpin of the trailer there between.

26. The method of claim 25, wherein the clamp member further includes an adjustable means for urging the upper surface of the body portion away from the clamp member, wherein at least a portion of the adjustable means for urging extends between the clamp member and the body portion.